Brooklyn City Hall Brooklyn Borough Hall 209-245 Joralemon St. Brooklyn Kings County New York

HABS No. NY-6260

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REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Building Survey National Park Service Department of the Interior Washington, D.C. 20240 Brooklyn City Hall (Brooklyn Borough Hall) 209 Joralemon Street Brooklyn New York City Kings County New York HABS No. NY-6260

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Addendum to

Brooklyn Borough Hall 209 Joralemon Street Brooklyn New York City Kings County New York

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20240

HABS No. NY-6260 (page 1)

CITY HALL PROJECT

Name: Brooklyn City Hall, now Brooklyn Borough Hall

Location: 209 Joralemon Street, facing onto the triangular park bounded by Joralemon Street, Court Street, and Cadman Plaza West, Brooklyn, New York City, Kings County, New York

Present owner, occupant, use: Owned by the City of New York. Serves as Brooklyn Borough Hall, occupied by the office of the Brooklyn Borough President and related offices.

Significance: Brooklyn City Hall is one of New York's finest Greek Revival buildings. Exemplifying all the hallmarks of the style with its bilateral symmetry, classical temple form with portico, trabeated windows and doors, and spare, simple ornament, it is outstanding for its beautiful proportions. The oldest public building in Brooklyn, it has been the home of the seat of government in that borough since 1848.

I. Historical Information

A. Physical history

- 1. Date of erection: 1845-49. The cornerstone for a city hall was laid on April 28, 1836, by Mayor Jonathan Trotter, walls built up to the first floor level. Construction halted as the result of the financial panic of 1837. In 1844 the Brooklyn Common Council directed the committee on lands and buildings to procure suitable plans and estimates for the erection of a city hall. Construction began in 1845 and continued until 1849.
- 2. Architect: Gamaliel King. Signed drawings of the building by King are in the possession of the Brooklyn Borough President's Office. Gamaliel King (dates unknown), who began his career in 1830 as a carpenter, had an active Brooklyn architectural practice between 1835 and 1874. Between 1850 and 1859 he was associated with John Kellum. King also designed the Kings County Courthouse (built 1862-65, demolished 1961).
- 3. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Stephen Haynes was general superintendent, Leonard Cooper did the carpentry work, Samuel Congdon was the ironmonger, and Thomas S. Denike did the masonry, taking up and reusing the foundation stones of the 1835 City Hall. Marble was supplied by Masterson and Smith.
- 4. Original Plans and construction: Original plans are in the possession of the Brooklyn Borough President's office. Except for the cupola and roof, the exterior of the building remains unaltered.

5. Alterations: A fire in 1895 destroyed the cupola and portions of the interior. In 1898, Vincent Griffith and the firm of C.W. & A.A. Stoughton rebuilt the cupola, added a fireproof copper-covered roof, removed the stairs in the rotunda, and added a staircase at the eastern end of the building. In 1903 the former Common Council chamber was reconstructed by Axel Hedman for use as a courtroom.

B. Historical Context

Brooklyn City Hall has served as the seat of city government in Brooklyn since 1848. (City offices moved in the year before construction was complete.) Since 1898 when Brooklyn was consolidated into the City of New York, it has served as Brooklyn Bobough Hall, housing the offices of the Brooklyn Borough President.

II. Architectural Information

- A. Description of Exterior: Brooklyn City Hall, which measures 175 by 100 feet, is rectangular in massing with two end wings projecting slightly to the rear. It has a very high basement which functions as a ground floor, two full stories, and an attic story surmounted by a shallow pitched roof with central domed cupola. The fifteen-bay facade is dominated by a full-height entrance portico set above a broad steep flight of steps. The structural load-bearing masonry walls of the building are faced on the exterior with Tuckahoe marble. The copper roofing is supported by a system of iron trusses and purlins. The structural roof deck is composed of 24" long extruded terra-cotta planks.
- B. Description of Interior: The interior of the building is laid out in an axial symmetrical plan which has undergone many alterations to accommodate changing office needs over the years. Notable interior spaces are the two-story rotunda with Doric colonnade (originally marbleized) adjacent to the entrance portico and the large two-story courtroom at the southwest corner of the third floor. This room features marbleized columns, gilded woodwork and plaster, and a coffered ceiling.
- C. Site: The building is situated at the south end of a landscaped triangular park and faces north onto the park.

III. Sources of Information

- A. Architectural drawings: 1846 drawings by Gamaliel King are in the possession of the Brooklyn Borough President's Office as are numerous drawings from later periods showing alterations and the current condition of the building.
- B. Early views: Numerous early views of Brooklyn City Hall may be found in the collections of the Long Island Historical Society, the Brooklyn Public Library, and the New York City Municipal Archives.

 Many of these are reproduced in Brooklyn's City Hall (see bibliography).

C. Bibliography

- 1. Primary sources: Deeds King's County Register's Office Records of city actions may be found in Manuals of the Common Council of the City of Brooklyn, available in the Long Island Historical Society, the Brooklyn Public Library, and the Municipal Reference and Research Center.
- 2. Secondary sources: At present the most useful secondary source is <u>Brooklyn's City Hall</u>: A Study Report by Conklin & Rossant.

 New York, 1981. This contains an extensive annotated bibliography of primary and secondary sources (attached).

Prepared by Marjorie Pearson
Director Of Research
Landmarks Preservation Commission,
City of New York
September 28, 1981

Brooklyn's City Hall: A Study by Conklin + Rossant, New York, 1981

Part VI Bibliography

The following list of materials used has been annotated where the title does not explain content. Some notes have been added also to emphasize the strengths and weaknesses of certain resources.

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|---------------------------|----------------------|----------|--|
| 1934-35 | 1833-34 | Year | |
| Brooklyn Directory | Brooklyn Directory | Title | |

| David G. Francis | James Miller | H. R. and W. J. Hearne | Thomas P. Teale | H. R. and W. J. Hearne and E. Von Nostrand | Compiler |
|--|---|--|---|---|----------|
| 1857 | 1860 | 1849-50 | 1848-49 | 1844-45 | Year |
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 - New York City Municipal References Library, Surrogates Court Building, 31 Chambers Street, NY.
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Long Island Historical Society, 128 Pierrepont Street, Brooklyn, NY.

Brooklyn Daily Eagle Scrapbook
A vertical file now available only on negative microfiche. from 1880's to 1930's. the editing bias of the compiler, but remains a strong graphic study of the building This is restricted by

Brooklyn Daily Eagle Postcard series, n.d. c. 1905 photos and old prints.

Brooklyn and Long Island Scrapbook

Very little material on Borough Hall.

Map Collection

Committee Reports Foster Collection

Borough Hall.

Most useful were Samborn maps, showing twentieth century changes in land use close to

Print Collection Pierrepont Collections

Architectural renderings, 1842, referring to City Hall, Brooklyn.

New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West, NY. Brooklyn Buildings File (Prints and Pictures) Pollard Collection

favorably with anonymous drawings on file at Long Island Historical Society. Twenty architectural drawings from office of Calvin Pollard, two of which compare